

Science and Technology

The Prime Minister and his advisers see science and technology as instruments of political manoeuvring, both domestically and in international affairs.

Dr. Uffen goes on to say:

Meanwhile the government's professionals—official advisers and public servants—were caught in the middle. They were supposed to stay out of sight and not usurp the responsibilities of their ministers, and having mostly been brought up in an older tradition and having been superbly trained in their own fields, they were content to do so. But they found that they were working for a government that did not have the same traditions.

Thus the professionals in science and technology were ignored while the politicians of science and the dilettantes were listened to. 'We were skated into the board,' one of those professionals told me. 'We were used as window dressing so that it could be said the government had all the right machinery. But real decisions were made elsewhere.'

That is exactly what happened. The government sensed that the public expected action in science and technology, and the Ministry of State for Science and Technology was established. But it was window dressing. The government made sure the minister had no muscle. It made sure the ministry could not disrupt the inherent purpose of science and technology, as the government saw it; the government wanted science and technology to be a tool which it could manoeuvre for its political ends. That is part of the political style of this government. It indulges in window dressing, cosmetics, manoeuvring, but not in actions which would lead to substantial benefits down the road. It does nothing if the benefits are over the horizon and not immediately available to provide political rewards.

The government gives short shrift to any long-term objective. A science policy, like an industrial strategy, involves a commitment over the long-term to do what is right, rather than what is popular. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the government have demonstrated admirably that they do not think the country should be going that way. If there is not some political advantage to be gained immediately, they are not interested. They do not want to fall into the trap of a science policy or industrial strategy which in the long-term might limit their options to do the popular thing. Such a course might limit their flexibility and force them to take decisions which are not popular today but are in the interests of our country tomorrow, and therefore are necessary in the longer run.

The throne speech of 1974 which announced that the Minister of State for Science and Technology was to be given more authority was a put-on, a charade. It was basically dishonest with the people. After all, what did we get after the election? A part-time minister was appointed. Yes, after the election we got a part-time minister. Soon after the minister was appointed I asked the acting prime minister of the day, the Prime Minister not being in the House, when the ministry was to be headed by a full-time minister, since the subject of science and technology deserved the attention of a full-time minister. The acting prime minister of the day indicated that he could think of no one who was more capable or better qualified to do the job than the current, part-time acting Minister of State for Science and Technology.

How competent and knowledgeable is the minister? On April 25, 1975, the hon. member for South Shore (Mr. Crouse) directed the following question to the minister, as recorded at page 5207 of *Hansard*:

[Mr. Andre.]

Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that Canada had a net trade deficit of almost \$7 billion in the field of high technology products last year, which is three times the loss of four years ago, and there is every indication that this year's figures will be even worse, I should like to ask the Minister of Science and Technology what steps the government plans to take to increase research and development in order to create the challenging jobs presently required by Canadians?

The Minister of State for Science and Technology replied:

Mr. Speaker, in general terms there has been a substantial increase, as an examination of the estimates will show in the various incentives designed to increase Canada's activity and capacity in the field of high technology. In addition to that, we have under way a series of studies in high technology fields, for example the programs being launched by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and perhaps also by the Minister of Communications in the field of satellites.

● (1530)

What are the facts? The Minister of State for Science and Technology says that in 1974-75 there was \$124,653,000 devoted for research and development grants. For 1975-76 this has fallen to \$121,930,000, a drop of \$2.5 million. That is not a substantial increase under any measure. It is exactly the opposite.

Was the minister deliberately misleading the House, or did he not know? I do not think there is a charitable interpretation to those options. Both are terribly damning; deliberately misleading or not knowing. He is the minister who is responsible for science and technology, and he does not know. If the government is sincere, and there is good reason to doubt it in terms of its commitment to a science policy for Canada, we must have a full-time minister for this important portfolio.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Andre: This minister and the ministry must get the authority promised in the throne speech of 1974. We can no longer tolerate the government going in exactly the opposite direction to its stated policies, which has been happening in science and technology.

We must adopt a firm and enforceable science policy. That can only be done with a minister who has authority. It has to be started soon. If not, then MOSST should be disbanded now. The estimates are nearly \$4 million. That is a waste of money if the government does not intend to give that ministry the authority to do what it is supposed to do.

Stop this charade. Stop fooling the Canadian people. Disband MOSST. Then we will be able to look at what is happening.

I see Your Honour is about to rise. It is near the end of my allotted time of a half hour. I will not presume on the House and go beyond that time. However, I want to state, and I am most sincere in this statement, that it is about time MOSST did something and that we had a strong minister, or it is time to stop this charade and disband it.

I want the record to show we realize that the expenditures for science and technology are of a long-term nature. There are no immediate political benefits to gain. Looking at the press gallery, we can see there is not a great deal of interest to the Canadian public. It is not a headline grabber. Maybe that is the trouble. However, it is important. The Conservative party set aside one of the few days